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ABSTRACT

Brief case studies are examined to show that change can be motivated by almost any part of the educational organization and that the degree of the change's success or failure depends to a large extent on the political environment existing within the school and the school district. Some recent examples in pertinent literature are examined, and some reflections on the "hows and whys" of change, from the perspective of both the principal and the superintendent, are made in considering possible change techniques and in demonstrating the need for honest introspection. General philosophical comments on the author's biases about the problems and pitfalls of change conclude the speech. (Author/MLF)

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PATHWAYS AND PITFALLS IN INTRODUCING CHANGE

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Preface

Why does change succeed or fail? What is the relationship of the superintendent to the change process? Where does the principal fit in? What role should members of the organization fulfill? What insights does recent literature suggest be applied when initiating change? I will address myself to these questions in the next few minutes and conclude with some recommendations.

Some Brief Vignettes

Let me start by relating some incidents that reflect different aspects of change:

Item: A huge wealthy foundation that has operated with great fanfare over a decade throws in the sponge and publicly declares that its stated mission of reforming the public schools has failed. The final report rationalizes the causes of non-success as lying outside the foundation. No mention is made of how the foundation selected its grant recipients, or how they were monitored.

Item: A small mini-foundation operating on a budget of $250,000 a year exists for six years. It promulgates and practices the belief that change must first take place in the hearts and minds of leaders before occurring in institutions. Approximately 150 men and women from coast to coast go through the training program of this foundation, becoming "Associates". As such, they are fully involved in the decision making that leads to the setting of annual projects and publications. When the founder of C/F/K/ LTD., Chuck Kettering dies in a tragic accident, the Associates are so committed to the ideals of the organization that they finance the continuing work of it through their own personal contributions. This organization is now called CADRE.

Item: A highly ambitious young superintendent hires a new principal to spearhead the change process in an extremely large high school. After 2½ years of enormous effort, the faculty being totally involved in the process, many changes are brought about by majority vote. Enthusiasm and morale are high among the students and faculty of the school. Political factors outside the school itself, however, begin to cloud events. The mayor of the city, antagonized both by the superintendent's salary (25% greater) and the amount of publicity given to him in the media, covertly forms a coalition. The school is attacked by commercial, political, and ideological forces and consequently loses consecutive levies at the polls. Increasing criticism is launched at the school because of the humanizing innovations that have occurred. The superintendent, fearful that an impending job switch might be jeopardized, quietly shunts the blame towards the principal. It is his fault that long hair, dope, and permissiveness

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(ad infinitum, ad nauseam) are present in the high school, not the hard working superintendent who is victimized by inept subordinates. The principal is the culprit guilty of "lowering standards". After 1½ years of undercutting the principal resigns, disillusioned and discouraged; the superintendent goes on to a larger and more prestigious system, and the changes remain, after both have left. The new superintendent shuns publicity and makes a large campaign contribution to the mayor's party. The twice defeated levy thereupon passes, with public support from the mayor.

Item: A dedicated superintendent is hired by the school board in a famous city with a mandate to bring about social as well as educational reforms in the system. He communicates his intent to both the staff and public, and is immediately attacked by local politicians. Central office personnel quietly but persistently block and/or sabotage his projects. The principals in the system split on whether or not to support his reforms. After three years of some change and much turmoil, progressive board members are voted out, conservatives are voted in, the superintendent is fired, and everything reverts to the status quo.

Item: A small school supervising principal (400 pupils, K-12) becomes alarmed at the number of pregnancies that occur annually among students, and wonders if some form of sex education program might be useful. Recognizing that this could cause great consternation in a strict religious community, he invites the school district ministers to a meeting, expresses his concerns, gives copies of a proposed text book to them for critiquing, and asks for advice. One week later the suggestion is made that he visit each of the eight farm councils in the school district and express his concern. The principal thereupon goes to eight night meetings, expresses his concerns, leaves copies of the proposed text book, and asks for advice. Twelve weeks after the first meeting, the principal is called to a meeting of community leaders and informed that the proposed course as laid out in the textbook will be acceptable provided he teaches it. The following fall a course in sex education is instituted, and not one protest is heard during the year.

Item: Supported by advice from the A.C.L.U., 300 students in a large suburban high school stage a sit-down strike in front of the school. The principal confronts the group, gets them back into classes after agreeing to meet with a negotiating committee, and spends the rest of the day listening to student demands that the school dress code be abolished. Two weeks later, after much publicity in the interim, the school board modifies the dress code and the principal is criticized at a subsequent faculty meeting by tenured teachers who accuse him of lowering standards.

Item: A veteran football coach loses all ten games in a disastrous season. Soon after the football banquet, the principal

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is asked to come to a closed meeting with all of the assistant coaches, who politely inform him that they will resign their coaching responsibilities en masse unless the head coach is fired. Angered by this disloyalty, the principal tells the group what they can do with their threat. Upon communicating this information to the superintendent, however, the principal is told that he must resolve the situation without any adverse publicity accruing to the system. Within one week, some of the coaches leak information to the local sports editor who is anti-head coach. The principal is called upon to publicly denounce the coach. He refuses, totally supports the head coach, takes the position he will not cave in to blackmail, and ends up getting fired along with the coach.

Now many of you in the audience have known of incidents similar to those just described and I have used these illustrations to demonstrate how varied can be the situations which bring about change, either good or bad. Our schools exist in a political climate and we had better recognize this fact of life. People cause change, people block change, human will and human passion being the fuels that fire the action.

In planning our pathway to change, we can help avoid pitfalls by asking some basic questions, for example:

(a) Do the taxpayers show willingness to pay for educational change?

(b) Are they basically interested in keeping the tax rates low?

(c) Are there conservative interests in the school district or among the faculty that fight change?

(d) How many teachers are interested in new techniques?

(e) Are controversial curricular innovations opposed by cliques of older teachers? By the union?

(f) How aggressive are the "young turks" among the faculty?

(g) Is the proposed change based upon the learning needs of pupils and does it therefore predicate itself upon commonly accepted principles of learning? Is it based on gimmicry?

(h) Will released time be provided on a stated basis to facilitate the deliberations of a total faculty?

Clearly, a host of factors may influence whether or not a a school "changes". With that in mind, let us consider recent professional literature for insights into and possible definitions of, some of these factors.

Recent Literature

An administrator usually institutes change because of a philosophical position. He uses certain managerial techniques to facilitate the decision that change is necessary. A few recent publications articulate views that have greatly stimulated my thought, and accordingly I share these reactions with you.

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Peter Drucker's 1973 masterwork, Management: Tasks-Responsibilities-Practices, is a huge book permeated by a continuous call for logical change. I think of it as the Mount Rushmore of present-day managerial literature, constructed as it is on such a gigantic scale, and especially call your attention to its sections on how the Japanese attack problems, how one can more logically set priorities by first defining the primary mission of the organization, and the best critique of MacGregor's Theory Y I have ever read.

Another book that definitely belongs in your professional library is Diagnosing Professional Climates of Schools by Robert Fox and associates. Fox emphasizes the need for a principal to be efficient in gathering and correctly interpreting relevant data in order to resolve key problem areas within the schools. He lists 30 different questionnaires for use in gathering information on all aspects of school life, and outlines in depth how one can utilize the "force-field" technique to bring about change.

A third publication that forced me into serious introspection on the function of the public schools was Philip Cusick's extraordinary paperback, Inside High School - The Student's World. Cusick, a young teacher and sociologist, was given permission to spend a year in an anonymous 1500 pupil high school. He was given a daily schedule, followed it, and was evidently youthful enough in his appearance to gain the confidence of all types of student groups. His major conclusion was that the main reason most pupils came to school was to have social relations with other students, that 65% of the average student's time was spent in pursuing those social relationships both in and out of class, that the average classroom teacher spent a minimum of 25% of classroom time in red tape, and that the unintended consequence of the school's organizational characteristics seemed to be that students spent very little actual time in the classroom involved in academic interaction with their teachers.

Another publication I wish to note is a C/F/K/Ltd occasional paper called The Self Performance Achievement Record (SPAR). All of the C/F/K/Ltd publications, by the way, can be ordered from Neuva Learning Center, P.O. Box 1366, Burlingame, California 94010, and I urge you to become familiar with these extraordinary writings. This booklet describes a process school administrators can follow in developing school improvement project goals, activities, objectives, check points, and evaluation procedures. In short, it lays out a blueprint for change, and mandates a systematic step-by-step procedures as follows:

(1) State the individual or institutional goal that is to be accomplished and designate it as either high or low priority;

(2) Identify and specify the individual activities that must be undertaken to achieve this goal;

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(3) What are the objectives to be achieved in reaching this goal?

(4) What will be accepted as evidence of success?

(5) What new abilities, skills, attitudes, and knowledge will have to be developed in order to achieve the project?

(6) What are the starting and completion dates of the project?

(7) Log, at specific dates, on a predetermined time line, progress or lack of progress.

Next I call to your attention a meaty little working paper by Ronald Havelock, published in 1970 by CRUSK (Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge) out of the University of Michigan. Only 25 pages long, it suggests three major strategies for bringing about change, lists seven major factors which predict successful innovation, and enumerates eight considerations to be pondered before selecting a final strategy. Innovations In Educations: Strategies and Tactics is hard reading, full of jargon, yet its ideas are pragmatic.

Finally, I suggest you read through a short occasional paper written by Eugene Howard and Monroe Rowland, The School Based Development Team as A Means of Fostering Rational Change in Educational Institutions. This paper published in 1969 has three objectives: To suggest that rational change in a school-based group of change agents to be called a "Development Team", to describe how such a group could function, to propose a synthetic model for decision making which could result in a well-planned systematically implemented program improvement.

Gut-level Considerations

I suggest that this professional literature will give you insights, theory, and techniques as to how you can bring about change. I now ask two basic questions that must be honestly confronted and dealt with by the principal: namely, what is the superintendent's reason for being interested in change, and why is the principal interested? Let us consider the implications of these questions, and start with the role of the superintendent along with his relation to change. It is imperative that the principal make a value judgement about the motives of the superintendent in pushing for change imperative if for no other reason than survival. Formulating a judgement will also help a principal work from a base of mental tranquillity. John Stanavage, a great educational thinker as well as a superb principal, once told me that the hardest thing for a principal to do in the midst of change was to keep his cool, to act but not react!!

The first question I would ask would be, what is the underlying cause motivating the superintendent? Is it because he is truly committed to improving the learning environment for all students? Is it because he is trapped into competition with a nearby school district and accordingly believes he must keep up with the Joneses?

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Is it because he is obsessed with gimmicry, with change for change's sake? Is it because he is under the gun from the school board for real or imaginary deficiencies within the school district? Or, is it because he has an insatiable ambition and is determined to use the present position as a public relations spring board to the "big time"?

A second question would be, what has his past track record been in reacting to criticism? Has he backed his subordinates or has he pointed the finger at others and passed the buck? Too many superintendents have done just that in past years and, if this is your reading, it would be wise to insist on instructions in writing whenever possible. Tied directly into this consideration would also be the basic question, how honest is he? Has he always levelled with you, publicly as well as privately? I repeat that battle scarred principals have learned to ask these questions about their superintendents for not only is "to understand to forgive", but also "to understand is to survive"!

In watching my fellow principals over the past twenty years, I have observed four general reactions to change situations and suggest that all of us in this room fit in one of those categories. Further, only by truly analyzing our own motives and secret hearts can we be at ease with whatever happens in our unique situations. With that in mind, here are the four types:

(1) Many principals are truly committed to a change process that would create better learning opportunities for their pupils, and approach all propositions strictly from that viewpoint. These men I respect as the true leaders of our profession;

(2) A second approach can be observed in the work of many conscientious veterans who are primarily interested in running a quiet and tidy ship. Change, of course, being messy and non-predictable, causes anxiety in the hearts of these men, yet the great majority will sincerely carry out their orders from headquarters and attempt to facilitate the success of the project. They will not attempt to block or sabotage the work of change-oriented groups;

(3) A third group is basically innovative because they see this approach as giving the opportunity to create a reputation as an aggressive "change-agent", which then is used to promote into that next "bigger and better" job. This type of principal will always be looking for angles to get into the newspapers;

(4) Finally, there is a minority who will resist to the bitter end anything that might disturb their comfortable bureaucracy. They sanctify rules and regulations and believe that the organization takes precedence over everything else, including students. They are never happier than when signing hall passes or counting paper clips and their master schedules repeat themselves year after year. Superintendents have to work over or around these roadblocks to change when any

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innovations are proposed.

Another way of catergorizing how principals react to change was made by Tannenbaum and Schmidt. They viewed the process from the perspective of how the principal used the power of his office, as follows:

(1) The principal who brings about change by simply making a solitary decision and then announcing it;

(2) The principal who brings about change by "selling" a decision he has already made;

(3) The principal who brings about change by presenting ideas and then inviting questions;

(4) The principal who brings about change by presenting tentative decisions;

(5) The principal who presents the problem and then brings about change by getting suggestions and then making a final decision;

(6) The principal who brings about change by defining the limits of action and then asks the group to make the decision within those limits, and;

(7) Finally, the principal who brings about change by laisse-faire, by permitting his subordinates to function without any limits being defined by him.

In reflecting on these seven techniques, I realize that I've used all of them at one time or another, depending upon my analysis of the given situation. There are two other series of steps that can work. The first is the position taken by Gerald Prince of Northglen School District in Adams County, Colorado, and he calls it simply "Points For Bringing About Personal Or Group Changes":

(1) The principal helps either individuals or groups of individuals in examining their own personal performance;

(2) He helps in establishing goals for changing personal performance;

(3) He assists the individual or group in gaining new information, ideas, principles, and directions to bring about the personal change;

(4) He works to establish a climate within the organization that will be friendly to experimentation;

(5) He helps in the experimentation with, and practice of, new ideas;

(6) He then follows up on the process that is being used, and evaluates it, per se;

(7) Finally, he attempts to gain family or organizational support for the new process.

In considering Prince's suggestions, the terms facilitator, friendly helper, non-directive and Rogerian come to my mind. The principal as a specialist in human dynamics, in exploding

individual potential. The second is the position espoused by an extraordinary principal in Washington State, Jim Monasmith. (Both Prince and Monasmith, by the way, are "Associates" of C/F/K/Ltd). Monasmith's plan is more direct, more Williamsonian than Rogerian. He believes in a three step system of evoking change:

(1) The group must agree on a definition of the problem or task that they can comfortably live with;

(2) The group then commits to solving the problem within a given time limit, one which they have set themselves. The principal, in the meantime, acts as a resource person to the group in ways that they define as desirable;

(3) If the group cannot solve the problem, or does not wish to solve it, the principal then takes over and exerts his direct leadership and authority.

Think this technique over! It has the group defining the problem. It has the group specifying what is needed in terms of research data, personnel, or input. It has the group establishing its own time line. Finally it has accountability in that if the problem can't be solved by the group, the principal is then free to mandate his own solution.

Conclusion

Let me recapitulate here what has been said up to now, and my reason for saying it. First, brief case studies were examined to show that change can be motivated by almost any part of the organization and that the degree of success or failure depends to a large extent on the political environment existing withing the school and the school district. Second, some recent examples pertinent literature were examined to see what insights or directions might thus be gained. Third, some reflections on the "hows and whys" of change, from the perspective of both the principal and the superintendent, were made for the purpose of considering possible techniques and to demonstrate the need for honest introspection. Now, let me close with some general philosophical comments on what my biases are about the problems and pitfalls of change:

I. I believe that all organizations are like living physical organisms and, as such, are either growing or dying. There is no such thing as standing still; therefore, change is inevitable by the very nature of life.

II. I believe that people are basically positive rather than negative, good rather than evil, and consequently that growth (or change) is a natural state of affairs.

III. I believe that the people affected by a change must be involved in the decision-making that leads to a change. Gene Howard puts it this way - either we get input from teachers in the friendly confines of a task force committee meeting or

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or we'll get it in the formal frigidity of negotiations.

IV. I believe that we cannot have true productivity without satisfaction. Anything within reason that can be done to show the teacher that he or she counts and is important to the organization will pay off in more and better work.

V. I believe that the process to be utilized in bringing about change must be completely publicized to the organization and must be understood by all during each stage of the process.

VI. I believe that leadership style is individual and that what works for one principal may not work for another. What is really important here is authenticity, being comfortable with one's self. Shakespeare said it all when he wrote, "know thyself".

VII. I believe in planning, in laying out logical and reasonable time lines, in helping people so organize that they may gather and process necessary data efficiently in reaching their decisions and consequent recommendations.

VIII. I believe that a principal must not be afraid to make decisions when and if the organization abdicates its responsibility for doing so.

IX. I believe that people are human, including superintendents and principals, and that they therefore do not always have altruistic reasons for supporting change or arguing against it. I know that change, per se, is not by itself all good or all bad but in many ways a "mixed bag". Knowing all that, it still seems natural and healthy to seek change if it is predicated upon better learning experiences for students and teachers.

X. Finally, I believe that you and I must be dreamers of dreams, and the keeper of these as well as other people's dreams until they come alive. This will bring upon us discouragement, failure at times, and censure from some of the hypocrites. Ultimately, however, it can only benefit those boys and girls God has given us to work with. Someday all of us in this room will spend our final day on the job. When that time comes and we review our professional contributions, it is my hope that we can, with Paul, say, "We have run a good race, we have fought the good fight, we have kept the faith".